

Explaining The Spirit Of Man

'May the God of Peace sanctify you completely. May your spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus our Messiah' (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

We will study what the scriptures say about the spirit of man then explain what the soul is. We know we are body, soul and spirit, but there is no need to explain about the body – it is our flesh, blood and bones. By studying the verses referenced in this Bible study, we will see how the Holy Spirit of God works with the spirit of life that He gave to us the moment we were conceived, when we were yet an unformed substance in our mother's womb and had not even seen one day (Psalm 139:13 to 16).

We are all made up of three parts: spirit, soul and body. The spirit of man, also called the spirit of life or the breath of life, is mentioned in the scriptures more than any other spirit. When Adam was created, he had the spirit of life breathed into his body and he became a living soul (Genesis 2:7); he became spirit, soul and a breathing body; three parts all wrapped up in one package. God gives breath and spirit to all the people on the earth (Isaiah 42:5). Without the spirit of man, our bodies are lifeless (James 2:26). The spirit of man is what drives our emotions, attitudes and reactions, causing us to do the sensible or silly things we do, and feel the way we feel, both positive and negative. It makes us courageous or timid, willing or unwilling, a leader or a follower. The spirit of man is our life and our breath. It is our being, our existence, our personality and our character. It makes us who we are. It makes us, us. Identical twins are unique in that they are identical copies of each other, but they have individual personalities and characters because they each have an individual spirit of man formed within them from conception. The Lord forms the spirit of man within us (Zechariah 12:1). The spirit of life leaves a child that is stillborn (Job 3:11). That shows us that the spirit of life was already in the child before it was born; it was formed there at the moment of conception.

The spirit of man, or the spirit of life comes from God and enters the unborn baby in the womb of the pregnant woman (Ecclesiastes 11:5) and returns to God on our death (Ecclesiastes 12:7). It is the spirit that gives us life and is owned by God (1 Corinthians 6:20). The Lord is God of the spirits of all flesh (Numbers 27:16). Just before Jesus died, He committed His spirit to God (Luke 23:46). When Jesus died, He gave up the spirit of life (John 19:30). When Stephen died, Jesus received his spirit (Acts 7:59). Jesus was put to death in His human body, but He was made alive in the spirit. That left Jesus free to preach to people who had died and whose spirits were in Hades, the waiting place of the dead that is also called a prison (1 Peter 3:18 & 19) so they could live for God in the spirit (1 Peter 4:6).

The spirit of life gives us health and makes us live (Isaiah 38:16).

God's anger can make our spirit faint with terror (Isaiah 57:16; Ezekiel 21:7).

Our spirit rejoices in God (Luke 1:47) and Jesus rejoiced in God (Luke 10:21).

The most unusual of God's recorded creations are the four living creatures mentioned in Ezekiel and Revelation. Their spirit of life is in their wheels (Ezekiel 1:20 & 21).

Hunger and thirst can make the spirit faint (Psalm 107:5). Food and water can revive the spirit (Judges 15:19; 1 Samuel 30:12).

We do not have the power over our own spirit to retain the breath of life neither do we have the power over the day of our death (Ecclesiastes 8:8).

Our spirit is alive because of the righteousness of Jesus living in us (Romans 8:10).

The Spirit of God testifies with our own spirit that we are the children of God (Romans 8:16).

When a person has been raised from the dead through prayer, their spirit returns from death (Luke 8:55).

It is our spirit that is saved from hell, or hades (1 Corinthians 5:5), which is the waiting place of the dead as they wait for Judgement Day (Revelation 20:12 & 13).

It is the spirit that is tormented in hades. The dead person feels pain, heat, anguish, thirst, discomfort; they can talk, reason and pray; they can still love their families and be concerned for them (Luke 16:23 to 31).

We have to control, rule and restrain our own spirit (Proverbs 16:32; 25:28) and it is the spirit within us that constrains us (Job 32:18).

Only a person's own spirit understands their own thoughts (1 Corinthians 2:11).

The spoken Word of God, written down for us in the scriptures are spirit and life (John 6:63).

When we pray in tongues, our spirit prays by the Holy Spirit within us (1 Corinthians 14:14) and the Holy Spirit knows what to pray (Romans 8:26).

The spirit of a man sustains us in sickness and pain (Proverbs 18:14).

All of these verses show us our life comes from the spirit that God forms within us.

Even Jesus had the spirit of man or the spirit of life, and the following group of scriptures show us that we feel emotion in our spirit, not in our soul as most people think and it is our emotions that react. Jesus discerned in His spirit, or could sense that the scribes were questioning Him in their hearts (Mark 2:8).

Jesus groaned and sighed deeply in His spirit because of the malicious attitude of the Pharisees (Mark 8:12). Jesus was chafed in spirit; deeply moved; disturbed; sighed repeatedly; groaned, wept and was deeply disquieted over the death of His friend Lazarus (John 11:33 & 35).

Jesus was troubled in spirit over the fact that Judas was about to betray Him (John 13:21).

The spirit can be overwhelmed by trouble (Psalm 77:3; 142:3; 143:4).

When the Queen of Sheba saw the excesses of Solomon, she was overwhelmed; there was no more spirit in her (2 Chronicles 9:4).

Our spirit needs to be refreshed (1 Corinthians 16:18; 2 Corinthians 7:13).

Sometimes our spirit cannot find relief when we are stressed (2 Corinthians 2:13).

The spirit can be grieved by sin (Acts 17:16); the spirit can be grieved by a broken heart (Isaiah 54:6) and the spirit can be grieved by anxiety (Daniel 7:15).

The spirit can be saddened (1 Kings 21:5), troubled (Daniel 2:1), crushed (Psalm 34:18; Proverbs 17:22; 18:14), broken (Job 17:1; Psalm 51:17; Proverbs 15:13); can fail, or be disheartened by circumstances (Psalm 143:7).

These scriptures describe deep emotions and they are felt in the spirit, not the soul.

Our attitudes, personality and character come from the spirit of man. Daniel had an excellent spirit (Daniel 6:3). That means he had the right attitude to God.

Jesus said, "You do not know what kind of spirit you are." Meaning they had the wrong attitude (Luke 9:55).

There is a spirit of a right attitude to God, 'Renew a right spirit within me' (Psalm 51:10), and a spirit of a wrong attitude to God; 'Whose spirit inspired what came forth from your mouth?' (Job 26:4).

There is a spirit that searches diligently for God (Psalm 77:6; Isaiah 26:9).

Unmarried people can be wholly set apart for God's service in body and spirit (1 Corinthians 7:34).

There is a willing spirit (Psalm 51:12; Matthew 26:41). 'The Lord aroused the spirit of Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah and the spirit of Joshua the high priest and the spirit of the remnant of the people, so they came and worked on the house of God' (Haggai 1:14). They all had a willing spirit and the correct attitude.

We must worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24), that is with the right attitude.

We must not turn our spirit against God (Job 15:13). That means we must not rebel.

We need to have the ability to discern between true and false spirits (1 Corinthians 12:10), or discern if people have the right or the wrong attitude.

We have the spirit of faith (2 Corinthians 4:13). Answers to prayer are achieved by faith, and faith is something we choose to exercise. It is a correct attitude.

When the Lord renews our attitude after we are born-again, He describes it as giving us a new spirit, a new heart and a new mind. We must be constantly renewed in the spirit of our minds, and the spirit of man can be defiled; therefore we need to cleanse ourselves (2 Corinthians 7:1; Ephesians 4:23).

The spirit of man is God's lamp in which He searches our hearts and attitudes (Proverbs 20:27); it is as though God has a spotlight shining inside us to reveal our true character. By 'seeing' or discerning the heart of Nathanael, Jesus could see that he had a good character and a good attitude (John 1:47).

We are one in spirit with Jesus (1 Corinthians 6:17) and the Lord Jesus is with us in spirit (Galatians 6:18).

We must stand firm in a united spirit and purpose (Philippians 1:27) and have a united attitude (2 Corinthians 12:18). These verses are speaking of having a right attitude so we can walk in unity with Jesus and with one another. We can be absent in body while being present in spirit and our spirits meet together with the power of our Lord Jesus (1 Corinthians 5:3 & 4; Colossians 2:5). That means somebody in Australia can pray and believe for healing for someone in the UK, because the Christians in the two countries are one 'in the spirit', or in unity, though absent in the body.

The following verses show the spirit of man forms our character.

There is a trustworthy and faithful spirit (Proverbs 11:13).

There is a humble spirit (Proverbs 16:19; 29:23; Isaiah 57:15; 66:2) and God blesses the humble, or the 'poor in spirit' (Matthew 5:3).

A gentle and quiet spirit is very precious in the sight of God (1 Peter 3:4).

There is a spirit of gentleness (1 Corinthians 4:21).

There is a patient spirit (Ecclesiastes 7:8).

There is a spirit of justice (Isaiah 28:6).

Both John the Baptist and Jesus grew up and became strong in spirit (Luke 1:80; 2:40) and this strong character was noticed before Jesus had turned thirteen (Luke 2:42 to 52).

When John the Baptist came in the 'spirit and power' of Elijah (Luke 1:17) he came with the same strong character, strong faith and the same attitude Elijah had, and Jesus explained that John was the Elijah who was to come to prepare His way (Matthew 11:14; 17:11 to 13).

The spirit of man can also be called courage (Joshua 2:11). When the peoples of Canaan heard about the Israelites, their hearts 'melted' and there was 'no spirit' in them (Joshua 5:1); they had lost their courage. God gives us a spirit of power, or courage (2 Timothy 1:7).

Intelligence is another name for the spirit of man. There is a spirit of intelligence in man, and the breath of the Almighty gives us understanding (Job 32:8).

There is a spirit of wisdom (Deuteronomy 34:9; Ephesians 1:17).

There is a spirit of understanding (Job 20:3).

Jesus had a spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge and fear of God (Isaiah 11:2).

Daniel had an excellent spirit and a spirit of knowledge, understanding, interpretation of dreams, revelations of God's mysteries, and the ability to remove doubts about the Lord (Daniel 5:12).

We have a spirit of prophecy which is a God-given gift. The Lord is God of the spirits of the prophets (Revelation 22:6), but the spirit of prophecy is under the speaker's control (1 Corinthians 14:32). We are to test every spirit of prophecy to be sure it has proceeded from God for many false prophets have gone forth into the world (1 John 4:1). The Lord says woe to the false or foolish prophets who follow their own spirit (Ezekiel 13:3).

The soul is described as the deepest parts of our fallen human nature. It was in the soul where Eve was tempted and where Adam disobeyed God and sinned. It is in the soulish realm where our rebellious sin nature lurks. Our soul, which is our sinful, corrupt character, and our spirit, which is God's holy character are separate but both live within our mortal bodies. The spirits of the righteous have been made perfect (Hebrews 12:23). It is the soul that is corrupt. The Word of God – the Bible – divides the carnal nature of the soul from the spirit of God's character, and of the joints and marrow, which is the body (Hebrews 4:12). The spirit and the soul return to God after we die, as long as we are believers. Our sinful soul is constantly warring against God's pure spirit and that is acted out in our bodies (Romans 7:4 to 25). What happens to our soul when we die? For the non-believer, the soul and the body are destroyed in Gehenna (Matthew 10:28). The soul of the believer will be preserved, sound and complete along with the spirit and the resurrected body (1 Thessalonians 5:23). That means we will still be body, soul and spirit in the Kingdom of God, but we will have a perfect resurrected body and our soul and spirit will be sound (perfect) and complete.

All of these positive actions, attitudes, reactions, emotions and goodness come from the God-given spirit that entered us in our mother's wombs when we were still 'an unformed substance' and before our days took shape. That is when God wrote all our days in His Book of Life (Psalm 139:16). We can recognise the Spirit of God in a person, because every God-given spirit will confess that Jesus our Messiah has become Man, and has come in human flesh. Every spirit that does not confess that Jesus has come in the flesh, is not of God but is the spirit of anti-Messiah and that attitude is in the whole world (1 John 4:2 & 3). The Greek word 'antichrist' minimises what is really meant here. Jesus is our Saviour Who literally took our sin upon Himself and gave His body of flesh and life-giving blood for us. Anyone, anywhere in the world, who refuses to believe that, has an anti-Messiah spirit. They do not want the holy Messiah. Whoever is of God listens to what is written in the Bible but he who is not of God does not listen. By this we know the difference between the Spirit of Truth and the spirit of error (1 John 4:6).

Amen and God bless you.

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